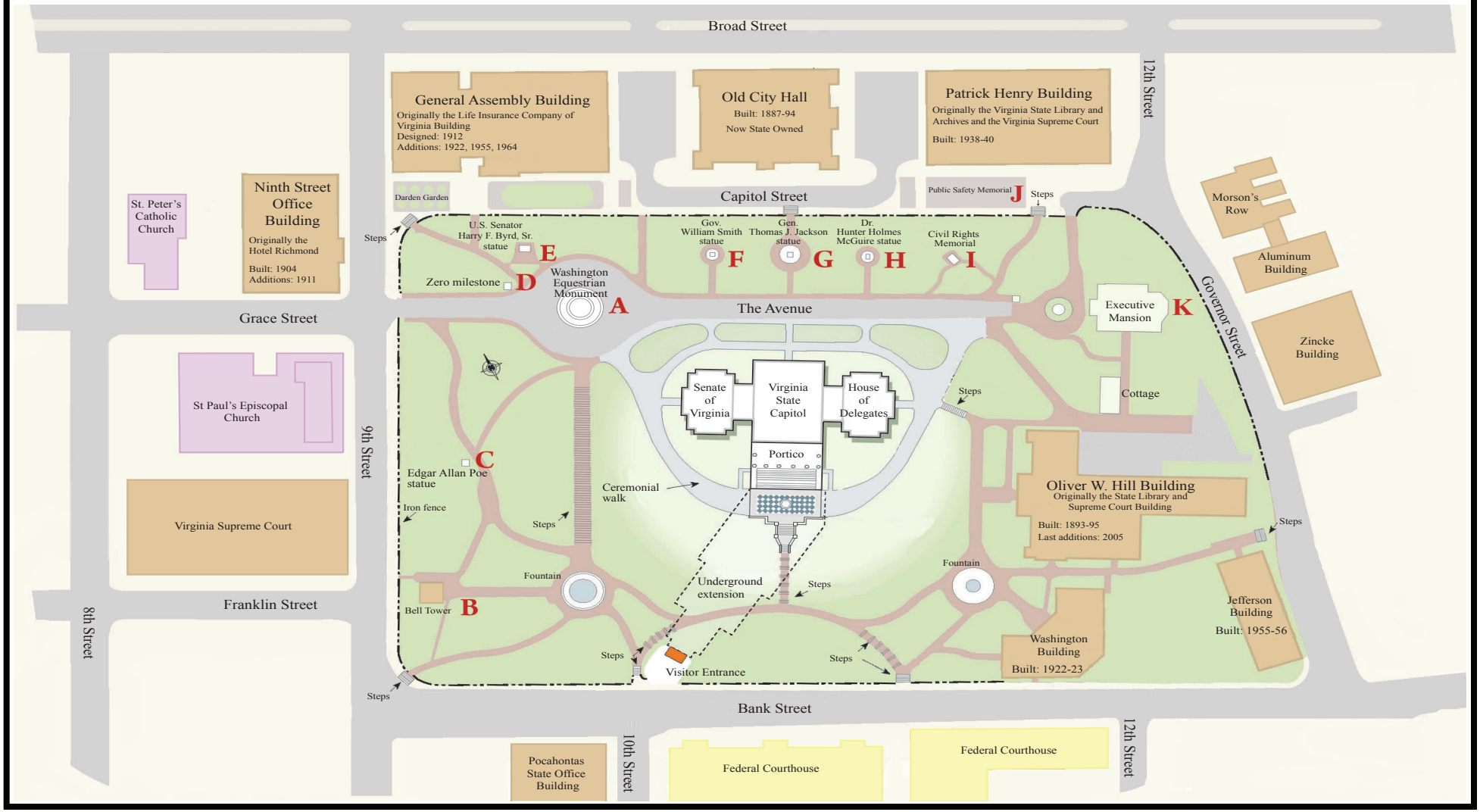
Virginia State Capitol and Capitol Square

In 1779, the Virginia Legislature voted to move the capital from Williamsburg to Richmond. Until a permanent Capitol could be built, the Virginia General Assembly met in two wood-framed buildings at the corner of what is now 14th Street and Cary Street. With Richmond as the new capital, six squares of land were selected for the placement of permanent public buildings. In 1788, the Thomas Jefferson designed Capitol was considered finished enough to house the Virginia General Assembly. Jefferson's Roman temple form building is the middle portion of the present-day Capitol. The original building was expanded in 1906 with the addition of two wings, and again in 2007 with an underground extension. The architecturally and historically important building is designated as a National Historic Landmark and tentatively listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

The public area surrounding the Capitol was originally a weed-filled open square with informal lanes and footpaths. In 1816, the Virginia General Assembly hired French-born Maximilian Godefroy to lay out a formal park. Two years later, the newly landscaped grounds were enclosed by the cast- and wrought-iron fence still in place today, and this area eventually came to be called Capitol Square. While retaining aspects of Godefroy's framework, Scottish-born John Notman developed an 1850 overlay plan of meandering walkways and native trees and shrubs that gave Capitol Square much of the character and appeal it retains today. This designed historic landscape is nationally significant.



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Capitol Square

Washington Equestrian Monument

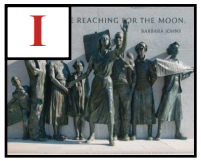
A large equestrian statue of George Washington atop a granite pedestal is located just northwest of the Capitol at the formal entrance to the square [**A**]. This monument was conceived to honor Washington and to glorify Virginia's contributions to our nation's independence. Virginia's role in the Revolution is represented by bronze statues of six soldiers and statesmen, which surround the mounted figure of General Washington at the top of the granite monument. Smaller allegorical figures below the six standing statues are inscribed with themes reflecting each patriot's contribution: Andrew Lewis, Colonial Times; Patrick Henry, Revolution; George Mason, Bill of Rights; Thomas Jefferson, Independence; Thomas Nelson, Jr., Finance; and John Marshall, Justice.

American Sculptor Thomas Crawford designed the monument and completed the statues of Washington, Jefferson, and Henry. The cornerstone was laid on Washington's birthday, February 22, 1850, and the Washington Statue was unveiled on February 22, 1858. Crawford died in 1857 before completing the monument. His American colleague, Randolph Rogers, executed the statues of Mason, Marshall, Nelson, and Lewis, as well as the allegorical figures, the last of which was put into place in 1869.

Statues, Monuments, and Trees

In the southwest corner of the Square near the Bell Tower [**B**], which was completed in 1825 for use by the Virginia Public Guard, is a seated statue of Edgar Allan Poe [**C**]. Poe grew up in Richmond and returned years later to edit *The Southern Literary Messenger.* On the grounds north of the Capitol are the zero milestone [**D**], for measuring highway distances from Richmond, and bronze statues of former Virginia Governor and U.S. Senator Harry F. Byrd, Sr. [**E**]; William "Extra Billy" Smith, Governor of Virginia and Confederate Brigadier General [**F**]; Confederate Major General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson [**G**]; and Dr. Hunter Holmes McGuire, a respected Southern surgeon [**H**].

Among those honored with trees on the grounds are presidents Washington and Tyler, governors Colgate Darden, Charles Robb, and Gerald Baliles, and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Martin Luther King, Jr. Among new monuments on Capitol Square is one honoring Virginians who were active in the Civil Rights movement during the 1950s and 60s [**I**]. Outside the fence is a new memorial that honors public safety workers killed in the line of duty [**J**]. Future monuments planned for the West Dell will honor the achievements of Virginia women and pay tribute to Virginia Indians.



The Executive Mansion

The National Historic Landmark Executive Mansion [**K**] is located just northeast of the Capitol within the grounds of the Square. Designed by Boston architect Alexander Parris, the Federal-style mansion has been the official residence of Virginia governors and their families since its completion in March 1813. With additions in 1906 and 1914, it is our nation's oldest purpose-built executive mansion still serving that use today.

The Executive Mansion is the third state-owned governor's residence. The first two governors under the Constitution of 1776, Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson, occupied the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg. In the spring of 1780, Governor Jefferson moved with the government to the new capital of Richmond. For a short period of time after that, Virginia's governors occupied rental properties.

Around 1781, the second governor's residence was purchased in Richmond on almost the same spot the Executive Mansion stands today. This second building was home to three future U.S. presidents: James Monroe as Governor, and John Tyler, Jr. and William Henry Harrison while their fathers were governors. In 1811, Governor John Tyler, Sr. brought about the decision to build the current residence. The Virginia General Assembly directed "the building of a house for the use of the Governor of the Commonwealth, on the lot on which the present Executive Mansion stands."